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Understanding Identity

Elaborating Psychological And Sociological Approaches to Identity

Bachelor's Thesis

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Identiteetin ymmärtäminen – identiteetin psykologisten ja sosiologisten lähestymistapojen tarkastelua (Pihla Remes)

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Identiteetti on laajasti käytetty termi sekä jokapäiväisessä puheessa että ihmis- ja yhteiskuntatieteissä. Identiteettiä on kuvailtu yhdeksi tutkituimmaksi aiheeksi yllä mainituilla tieteenaloilla. Identiteetin merkittävyydestä kertoo myös se havainto, että Suomen kansallisessa opetussuunnitelmassa (2014) identiteetti mainitaan yli sata kertaa. Tiede ei kuitenkaan tunne yksiselitteistä määritelmää identiteetille. Identiteettitutkimus on huomattavan jakautunutta. Jakautumisen taustalla ovat metateoreettiset näkemyserot identiteetin olemuksesta. Tämän kirjallisuuskatsauksen aiheena on tutkia ihmis- ja yhteiskuntatieteiden eri käsityksiä identiteetistä ja pyrkiä luomaan kattava ymmärrys käsitteestä.

Identiteettitutkimus on jakautunut kahteen päälinjaan: psykologiseen ja sosiologiseen identiteettitutkimukseen. Tämä kuvaileva kirjallisuuskatsaus tarkastelee merkityksiä, joita psykologia ja sosiologia antavat identiteetille. Tutkielman lähdeaineisto koostuu aiheen kansainvälisestä kirjallisuudesta, jonka pohjalta merkittävimmät psykologiset ja sosiologiset lähestymistavat identiteettiin on esitelty.

Identiteetti terminä viittaa asioihin, jotka määrittelevät yksilöä. Identiteetti merkitsee rajaa samanlaisuuden ja erilaisuuden välillä. Identiteettitutkimusta jakavat erilaiset käsitykset siitä, mitä nämä yksilö määrittelevät tekijät ovat. Psykologinen tutkimushaara näkee yksilöä määritteleviksi tekijöiksi pääasiassa henkilökohtaiset ominaisuudet kuten persoonalliset piirteet, käytöksen tai luonteenlaadun. Sosiologinen identiteettitutkimus taas esittää yksilöä määritteleviksi tekijöiksi yhteiskunnallisen jäsenyyden kategorioita ja yhteisöllisiä tai ammatillisia jäsenyyksiä tai rooleja, joissa yksilö vaikuttaa omien valintojensa tuloksena.

Pohjautuen tähän kirjallisuuskatsaukseen voidaan ehdottaa, että identiteetti on merkityksiä luova käsite, joka voi auttaa ymmärtämään ympäröivää maailmaa. Identiteetti on yksi tapa sanoittaa niitä psykologisia kokemuksia ja sosiaalista käytöstä, joita ihmiset kokevat eläessään. Identiteetillä on lukuisia eri merkityksiä eri konteksteissa. Identiteettikäsitteen suosion huomioon ottaen on hyödyllistä olla tietoinen identiteetin monimerkityksellisyydestä.

Avainsanat: identiteetti, psykologia, sosiologia

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Understanding Identity – Elaborating Psychological And Sociological Approaches to Identity
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Identity is a widely used term in everyday language as well as in the social sciences. Identity is described to be one of the most researched topics in the social sciences. The importance of identity is also visible in the Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014), which mentions the term “identity” over a hundred times. However, the social sciences do not know an unambiguous definition for the term. The field of identity research is notably divided in its metatheoretical assumptions about the nature of identity. This thesis examines the different meanings of identity in the social sciences and aims to create a comprehensive understanding of identity.

The identity research field is divided into two major approaches: psychological and sociological. This thesis is a descriptive literature review that examines the main meanings that psychology and sociology give to identity. The thesis is based on international literature and aims to present some of the main approaches to identity.

Identity as a term refers to those aspects that define who one is. It is the margin of sameness and difference. The metatheoretical differences in the field of identity research arise from the differences in the views about things that define the individual. Psychology primarily suggests that identity is a property such as individual's mental traits, behaviour and dispositions. Sociology primarily suggests that an individual is defined by societal memberships, community or occupation memberships and roles that an individual has chosen for themselves.

Based on this literature review it is suggested that identity is a meaning-making concept that creates one alternative way of understanding the world. Identity provides one way to explain the social behaviour and psychological experiences that human beings have in this world. Identity can refer to multiple different things in different contexts and due to its popularity, it is useful to be well-informed about the various possible meanings of identity.

Keywords: identity, psychology, sociology

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1 Introduction

This Bachelor's thesis is a literature review that aims to analyse the Western meaning of *identity*. In everyday life, identity provides answers to questions such as who we are and where we belong now and in the future (Ropo, 2007). The term "identity" is widely used in everyday language as well as in social sciences, yet the social sciences do not know an unambiguous definition for the term (Gleason, 1983; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Due to this tension some researchers have questioned the necessity of the term (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). However, despite the contradiction, identity is described to be one of the most researched topics in the social sciences (Vignoles et al., 2011; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). In his analysis about identity research, Côté (2006) has brought forth the observation that identity research has divided into two major approaches in social sciences: psychological and sociological. Thus, the research questions are: what does identity mean in psychology and what does identity mean in sociology?

A comprehensive understanding of identity is a significant benefit to a person who studies education and aims to work as a professional in the field of education. According to research, identities influence and predict human motivation, thinking, feeling, actions, and self-regulation (Leary & Tangney, 2012). This type of knowledge is foundational for a person working in a humane field such as education. In addition, the educational sciences are often multidisciplinary in nature. Educational knowledge is often enriched with expertise from other social sciences. As identity is one of the most researched topics in the social sciences, it is useful to be well-informed about the term.

Identity can also be found from the Finnish Core Curriculum which connects this term to the future work life of the education students. The Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014, 13) states that: "While learning the pupils are building their identity, their understanding of humanity, worldview and philosophy of life." Ropo, Sormunen and Heinström (2015, p. 11) have pointed out that it is therefore important that teachers are able to make pedagogical decisions that enable their students to develop their identities. All in all, identity is mentioned over one hundred times in the Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014), which also shows the significance given to this concept in the field of education.

In addition to demonstrating the topicality and importance of the concept of identity in education and social sciences, this literature review also aims to form a theoretical foundation for my Master's thesis. In the Master's thesis, the topic of identity is hoped to be analysed at a deeper level with a study that aims to explore the Finnish-Estonian youth's conceptions about their

cultural identities. The Finnish-Estonian children and youth form one of the biggest foreign-language groups in the Finnish education system (Finnish National Board of Education, 2017). A deeper knowledge of their situation could provide valuable information for Finnish teachers.

The first chapter of this thesis is a historical review that aims to shed some light on how the Western concept of identity has developed throughout times and cultures to where it is today. The aim of the chapter is to provide a historical review that gives an understanding of the present meanings of the term “identity” which are explored in the following chapters. The history review is followed by chapters about identity in psychology and in sociology. These chapters explore some of the main identity theories and researchers in the field. The final chapter discusses the essence of identity and draws together the final conclusions about the meaning of identity.

To prevent confusion, the meaning of the term *self* is explained before the main chapters begin as the concept of self is sometimes used as a synonym for identity (Leary & Tangney, 2012). However, this literature review subscribes to the view that self refers to selfhood that consists, among other things, from multiple identities as defined by Leary & Tangney (2012, p. 74) in the *Handbook of Self And Identity* and by Owens & Samblanet (2013, p. 226) in the *Handbook of Social Psychology*.

2 Brief History of Identity

2.1. Early History of Identity

The word “identity” derives from the Latin word *identitās* or *ident* (*idem*) which means “sameness” and “staying the same”. Its emergence in Latin has been dated till the end of the 16th century (Ropo, 2007, p. 26). According to Hammack (2015), the historical construction of identity in the West can be traced back to the ancient Greece and Rome in the domain of philosophy before the formation of social sciences in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The modern notion of identity comes from the philosophical ideas about memory and perception from the Enlightenment era, which were subsequently acquired by the first generation of psychologists and sociologists (Hammack, 2015, p. 13).

Burkitt (2011) explores the early history of identity in the West and places the origins of identity to the ancient Greco-Roman society and culture, especially to the philosophy of Stoicism where he believes the original roots of the notion of selfhood can be found. Burkitt (2011) connects this interpretation to the Greco-Roman conception about self as a mask or persona in the public life and to the experience of the public self, enabling the experience of an invisible inner self.

Ramsay (2010) shares Burkitt’s view and places the historical beginning of identity in the West to the famous saying of Socrates “to know thyself”. According to Ramsay (2010) the beginning of the knowledge about oneself in the ancient Greek society started from the inescapable premise of human existence: we are mortal– the undeniable starting point of everyone’s identity. Ramsay (2010) continues that the original meaning of identity in the Greek philosophy was, therefore, to provide a way to cope with one’s mortality, and this eventually led greater distinction between the body and soul and between the worldly life and other worldly-life.

Many of the researchers (see Bauman, 2011; Burkitt, 2011; Ramsay, 2010) seem to have a mutual understanding that the consideration of mortality and other worldly-life during the ancient Greco-Roman times led towards Christianity which can be said to be the next great influencer in the historical construction of the identity in the West.

Burkitt (2011) describes that the dominant belief during the Middle Ages was that humans find the truth from inside and above themselves – from God. The meanings and purpose came from God who was to be found inside of our souls, yet God was thought to be above us (Burkitt, 2011). The main figure in the early philosophical history of identity was St. Augustinus, the early

Church Father in the 354–430 AD whose work *Confessions* is considered to be a notable forerunner to Rene Descartes, whose writings are considered to have established the notion of the inner nature of human beings in the 17th century (Burkitt, 2011, p. 27).

However, the gap between St. Augustine and Descartes that spans over a thousand years should not be viewed as the “dark ages of the self” where historical notions of self-identity cannot be traced (Burkitt, 2011). According to Harbus (2002), descriptions of the individual’s inner life and struggles with the self can be found from this era, for example in the literature of Anglo-Saxon England from the 6th to the 11th centuries. To Harbus (2002) this shows that the experience of having a private inner self did not disappear during the time between early Christianity and the awakening of the Enlightenment era.

The earliest statement related to the modern idea of identity is thought to come from Rene Descartes (1596–1650), whose famous words “cogito, ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”) were the first to place rational and private cognition at the centre of a human being (Hammack, 2015). Burkitt (2011, p. 273) describes Descartes’ contribution to the historical chain of identity as “a formula -- which placed the power of private, rational thought at the heart of Western philosophy in the seventeenth century, and also at the heart of Western identity.” Burkitt (2011) also notes that Descartes placed an emphasis on the individuality of human beings and the isolation of their thought.

Hammack (2015) describes how notable 18th-century philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and David Hume stood up against the notion of isolated individuals. Kant and Hume challenged the notion of an identity that inheres in the properties of a person, namely in an object, and instead emphasised the memory that creates the ability to perceive sameness or dissimilarity (Hammack, 2015). Hammack (2015) describes that especially Kant emphasised the notion that an individual can only know oneself in relation to the world and reintegrated the idea of identity back to the social environment. Eventually, the idea of memory and perception as the foundation of identity were taken by the first generation of psychologists, notably William James (1842–1910) and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) (Hammack, 2015). The influence of James’ and Mead’s theoretical proposals on identity can still be seen in the major psychological and sociological identity theories nowadays, for example in McAdams’s narrative identity theory (1988) and in Stryker’s (1980) structural approach to symbolic interactionism theory (Hammack, 2015).

As social sciences emerged from philosophy during the late 19th century, the history of identity continued in three distinct fields: philosophy, psychology, and sociology (Hammack, 2015).

Each of them represents their own historical development of identity to the present-day. (Hammack, 2015). The thesis continues by exploring the main theoretical developments of identity research from each field.

2.2. Recent History of Psychological Identity

Leary and Tangney (2012) describe the development of psychological identity research at the beginning of the 20th century as gradual, even though the notable groundwork was set by the theorists James and Mead. Leary and Tangney (2012) assess that the development did not really continue before the 1950s since behaviourism dominated the new field of psychology at the beginning of the century. At the time, psychoanalysis was the only alternative approach, but generally it was considered too vague for academic psychology since the theory contained invisible internal forces (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

Interest towards identity returned during the 1950s (Leary & Tangney, 2012). Leary and Tangney (2012) mention Goffman's work on self-presentation (1959) as a notable contributor since it sparked renewed interest in psychological study of identity. A major shift happened during the 1950s as Erik H. Erikson proposed the identity development theory (1950), which suggested identity formation during adolescence (Bell, 2010). Erikson's theoretical thoughts popularised the psychological study of identity and it began to grow exponentially during the latter half of the 20th century, and it has not shown any signs of downward trend ever since (Bell, 2010).

Another major breakthrough occurred during the 1970s and 1980s as the cognitive aspect of psychology emerged and legitimised the study of thoughts and internal cognitive processes (Leary & Tangney, 2012). The popularity of identity research in psychology grew as the approach to the identity and self was cognitivised (Leary & Tangney, 2012). The 1970s also saw the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner emerge, which was the fruit of the long establishment of the social aspect in the psychological identity research (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

Hammack (2015) describes how up until the 1930s identity was seen as something private and internal. These individualistic approaches were eventually accompanied by the social psychological approach during the 20th century. Similarly, many other approaches of identity research eventually established their place in the psychological identity field, one of them being the narrative approach by McAdams in the 1980s (Hammack, 2015).

As for the 21st century, Leary, and Tangney (2012) describe psychological identity as a notably popular topic of research and a central term in social sciences. However, they point out that the popularity of the topic has led to a situation in which identity field is very diffused and scattered (Leary and Tangney, 2012). Other researchers such as Côté (2006) have also discussed the same issue.

2.3. Recent History of Sociological Identity

This chapter examines the development of identity from the end of the Enlightenment era to the present day in the field of sociology. Serpe and Stryker (2011) write that the perspectives of the theory known as symbolic interactionism underlies most of the identity research in sociology. Therefore, this chapter first explores the development of symbolic interactionism and subsequently the other identity developments in the field.

As the social sciences started to emerge from philosophy at the end of the 19th century, the foundational work of Erik. H. Erikson did not only inspire the new psychologists of the time (Arena & Arrigo, 2006). The inspiration also spread to the emerging study of sociology that was forming its own understanding of social human behaviour, which eventually became known as symbolic interactionism (Arena & Arrigo, 2006). Symbolic interactionism, originally conceptualised by Mead (1934) and theorised by his student Blumer (1937, 1969) eventually divided into two schools of thought: situational and structural symbolic interactionism (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). The origins of symbolic interactionism, and thus the sociological study of identity, can be traced back to the 18th-century Scottish moral philosophers such as Adam Smith and David Hume whose thoughts eventually served as a foundation to Blumer, who constructed the symbolic interactionism theory based on their thinking (Serpe & Stryker, 2011).

From the beginning, the sociological approach left behind the unconscious internal forces of ego identity that were central in the Freudian tradition at the time and adopted an approach that studied human behaviour from the perspective of interaction between the self and the society (Arena & Arrigo, 2006). Arena and Arrigo (2006) write that the study of human behaviour from the standpoint of society instead of biology was a part of the bigger countermove against behaviourism at the time. Giorgi (2017) similarly expresses that symbolic interactionism emerged in reaction to behaviourism.

The main interests of sociological identity research vary as time goes on and changes take place in societies. In 1998, Craib assessed that the current interest of sociological identity research is in the ethnic identity, while 30-years ago it had been in class-identity. Hall (1996) writes that the sociological identity research during the 20th century mainly focused on the possibility of identity existence during the modern times. At the end of 20th century, sociologists such as Hall (1996), Craib (1998), and Bauman (1996) pondered the kind of effects of that the massive societal changes brought by the emergence of modern and postmodern times, globalisation, and capitalism would have on identity from the sociological perspective. The common notion was that the rapidness of the modern world has led to uncommitted and unsure identities (Bauman, 1996; Craib, 1998; Hall, 1996).

As for the present day, Serpe and Stets (2013) name three notable areas that the sociological identity theories influence. According to Serpe and Stets (2013), the sociological identity research has been applied especially to areas such as crime and law, education, and ethnicity. During the 21st century, sociological identity research has also aimed to deepen its knowledge on areas such as social movement activity, stigmatised identities, identity formation and change, and the significance of situational factors (Serpe & Stets, 2013).

2.4. Recent History of Philosophical Identity

In the beginning of this chapter, the earlier history of identity was explored by examining identity in the history of philosophy. The unilateral development of identity came to an end as social sciences emerged from philosophy in the 19th century (Hammack, 2015). The exploration of identity's history in the domain of philosophy earlier in this chapter left at Kant's thought that identity is a memory-based idea and that the social world is very significant in the process of knowing oneself.

Ramsay (2010) writes that the next notable influence on the development of identity was philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), who joined Kant in the process of transforming identity from the influence of Platonism, Christianity, and Descartes. According to Ramsay (2010), Hegel linked identity to difference, social world, and history, and saw that by exploring social and historical relations one creates meanings and differences that are needed for identity definition. Ramsay (2010) continues that Hegel's theorisation led the way for the next three major identity

theorists in the history of philosophical identity: Karl Marx (1818–1883, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939).

Ramsay (2010) describes that the three philosophers mentioned above from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century are conjoined by their shared understanding of the indisputable premise of identity: the historical and social relations. Ramsay (2010) describes that to them identity could not be perceived outside of the web of social relations. Ramsay (2010) continues by pointing out that Marx shared the idea of the importance of language in identity definition with Kant. For Kant and Marx, language was a practical consciousness that comes to existence through interaction with others (Ramsay, 2010). Marx saw that language creates social classes. Therefore to Marx, identity became a question where one finds himself in the aggregate of social relations that exist in social, historical, and class-based contexts (Ramsey, 2010).

As for Nietzsche and Freud, Ramsay (2010) shows that they presented very different approaches to identity. Nietzsche criticised the historical construction of identity in the West and saw that the influence of Christianity had furthered guilt and resentment into identity and wanted to overcome this creatively and transform identity and culture as a whole (Ramsay, 2010). On the other hand, Sigmund Freud created the psychoanalysis theory, which was the first extensive non-behaviourist theory of mental life (Giorgi, 2017). According to the psychoanalytical view, identity is created during infancy and childhood. It stays with us and continues to influence our later relationships. Therefore, according to Freud's thinking, human beings experience the feeling of otherness in childhood which creates partly unconscious forces that continue to influence the selfhood (Ramsay, 2010).

Finally, Ramsay (2010) names one more major influence on philosophical identity theories from the 20th century, which came from Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). Ramsay (2010, p. 559) describes Heidegger's insightful understanding of identity: "We are always who and how we are in the web of significance of our being-in-the-world -that is to say, a series of relations given from the start that we cannot wholly transcend. Identity is never wholly fixed or fluid." His theoretical thoughts have influenced the major theorists during the 21st century, for example Foucault, Irigaray and Derrida, and are going to keep influencing the philosophical thinking of identity in the future according to Ramsay's (2010, p. 559) assessment.

3 Different Approaches to Identity in Psychology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explores how identity is viewed in psychology. Firstly, the main purpose that psychology gives to an identity is described. Following this is an overview about three notable identity theories in psychology. According to Côté (2006), identity in psychology has more of an individualistic focus and is viewed as a trait or property of a person. Therefore, psychological definitions usually refers to an individual's mental traits, behaviour and dispositions that can be predicted as subjective properties of the individual (Côté, 2006).

Identity's main purpose according to psychology is described by Rivera and Hohman (2010, p. 607), who write that "In the end, the psychology of the self and identity seem to have one focus: the creation and maintenance of positive self-schemata." *Self-schemata* are a cognitive-affective structures that organizes one's self-concepts (Samson, 2010, p. 709-710). Rivera and Hohman (2010) explain that identity constructs a part of the self-concept from the information that is gathered from three different sources: the internal information from oneself, information from other individuals, and information from groups.

According to Rivera and Hohman (2010), inconsistent information from different sources can threaten the positive self-schemata. Therefore, the mind has different mechanisms to maintain a cohesive identity while gathering information (Rivera & Hohman, 2010). Rivera and Hohman (2010) describe *appraisal* as the gathering of information that is accurate and valid. *Self-verification* is gathering information that confirms beliefs that one already has (Rivera & Hohman, 2010). *Self-enhancement* is the act of gathering information that disconfirms the negative self-knowledge and makes the individual seem better (Rivera & Hohman, 2010). River and Hohman (2010) write that that even though appraisal seems to be the most accurate way of gathering information, research has shown that self-verification and self-enhancement are the most often used mental mechanisms.

In psychology, the creation and maintenance of positive self-schemata is considered important since it satisfies basic psychological needs of a human being (Deci & Ryan, 2012). As the basic psychological needs Deci & Ryan (2012) name the sense of belonging and relatedness, feeling of competence, and the need for autonomy. Positive self-schemata also protects a person's sense of the self and emotions in negative life encounters through self-schematas which draw sense of

fulfilment (Samson, 2010). Therefore, psychology strongly links identity with psychological well-being.

3.2. From Psychoanalysis To Identity Development Theory

Identity development theory is a psychological approach which studies how individuals form an identity as they mature from childhood into adulthood (Bell, 2010). Its theoretical roots are in Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, whereas Erikson's work is based on Freud's psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis had strong impact and foundational position in the psychological identity research are the reasons for presenting the theory in this chapter. Giorgi (2017) describes psychoanalysis as the first psychological theory of mental life that was comprehensive as well as non-behaviourist and therefore it had a strong impact on identity theory. Psychoanalysis, originally created by Sigmund Freud in the early 20th century, was not originally an identity theory (Giorgi, 2017). However, it used the concept of identification in the sense that it created the theoretical base on which the psychoanalytic identity theory was later built on (Giorgi, 2017).

Psychological study of identity was founded and popularised by Erik. H. Erikson (1950), who "located his theory of psychological development, as well as his central concept of ego identity, within the matrix of psychoanalytic theory" (Bell, 2010, p. 205; Kroger & Marcia, 2011, p. 32). In the core of Erikson's identity theory is the tension of a developing individual who tries to find sameness and continuity with their identity in the social world that is complex and multifaceted (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). Therefore, as Bell (2010, p. 206) describes Erikson's understanding about it "identity is the negotiation of the self in relation to others".

The theory of psychological development consists of eight stages of life that each include a psychological struggle. In each stage an individual tries to clarify his or her relationship to the social world. (Kroger & Marcia, 2011.) The stages are chronologically from trust to autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and integrity and they cover the whole human lifespan (Erikson, 1950).

Wiggins (2010) writes that the id, ego, and superego were ideas represented in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis which reflect the three layers of mental life. According to psychoanalysis, the id is the part of the mind that is concerned with direct gratification such as eating, the superego is the higher moralizing part of the mind, and between these two is the ego, the realistic part of the

mind, which tries to balance the urges of the id and the moral statements of the superego (Wiggins, 2010). As Wiggins (2010) summarizes it: “The id, ego and superego represent three parts of self or identity: a hedonistic self, a public self and a moral self”. According to Erikson, ego’s psychological development task during adolescence is to form a fairly consistent identity and to end the role confusion (Bell, 2010). Eventually, the psychoanalytic theory of mental life led to the formation of identity development theory as the stage of identity development was widely discussed among academia and in popular culture (Bell, 2010).

The premise of identity development theory is that identity is a major developmental task during the entire lifespan, and therefore it must be connected to other major aspects of human development (McLean & Syed, 2015). This developmental approach to identity was strongly influenced by Marcia’s identity status theory (1966), which has been prominent approach to identity development theory since its emergence (McLean & Syed, 2015). In his theory, Marcia proposes that an individual can be given a status according to the stage of their identity development (Hammack, 2015). According to Marcia (1966) the status of the individual is *achievement* if their exploration and commitment to an identity are high (Hammack, 2015). If an individual has high exploration but low commitment, the status is *moratorium* (Hammack, 2015). An individual who has high commitment, but low exploration is in a state of identity *foreclosure*, since they are committing to an identity without fully exploring other options (Hammack, 2015). The fourth status is *diffusion*, which reflects low exploration and commitment (Hammack, 2015).

Bell (2010) states that the field of identity development has matured a lot from its initial stages and describes how it has developed from simple developmental categories to a more comprehensive field of research where cultural, cognitive, and neurological perspectives on human development and identity formation enrich the understanding of identity. Bell (2010) says that the present-day identity development theory reflects more on the complexity of postmodern world by assuming that a person holds many domains of identity, such as ethnic or religious identities, which can differ in their potential level of identity development. An increasing number of present-day scholars view identity as a collection of different identities: the selfhood is seen to consist of multiple identities (Bell, 2010).

3.2. Social Identity Theory

The sociological and psychological perspectives are the main approaches to identity in the identity research field, but there is a notable bridge between the sociological and psychological understandings of identity, which lies in the social identity theory where the two approaches overlap to some extent (Côté, 2006). Côté (2006) has described that the common ground that social psychology holds as a platform, promises a more cooperative relationship between sociological and psychological identity research in the future. In psychology, the social identity theory represents an approach where identity is not primarily defined by individual's personal traits but by the group memberships that they have (Hogg, 2012). The theory was originally created by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s as a reaction to the prevailing individualistic approaches in the American social psychology at the time (Spears, 2011). The distinctiveness of the approach in psychology as well as its position as one of the most significant theories in the branch of social psychology is why it deserves examination among the other main identity theories mentioned in this chapter (Grant, 2010; Hogg, 2012; Serpe & Stets, 2013).

Grant (2010) explains how globalisation has increased interaction with the diverse others and how increased interaction has led to a need to define who we are (*ingroup*) in comparison to others (*outgroup*). According to Grant (2010), the two main ways of doing this are construing one's identity either through an individual or a collective view. Social identity theory is a theory of self where the construing is done through the collective view, with similarity to people in the ingroups and the differences to the people in the outgroups defining the self (Grant, 2010). Social identity theory does not explore personal identity, which focuses on individual's characteristic attributes and close relationships (Hogg, 2012).

Spears (2011) says that the validation of the social identity theory's collective construe is reasoned with the same arguments that many of the other psychological identity theories are reasoned with as well: people's need to maintain positive self-schemata and to reduce the uncertainty of the social world. Spears (2011) explains that the social identity theory proposes that humans categorise the social reality around them into groups, which leads to a favourable social comparison between the groups that one identifies with as a member and the other groups that they do not identify with as a member. A positive membership holds value and emotional significance to an individual. Therefore, the comparison enforces person's positive social identity and thus the positive self-schema. (Spears, 2011, p. 202-203; see Tajfel & Turner, 1979.) Individuals identify with groups and categorize the social world around them in order to reduce uncertainty and create structured knowledge (Grant, 2010). Grant (2010) explains that in a world

of social interaction this knowledge enables the individual to predict others' behaviour and one's own placement in the future.

The social identity theory explores identity found in social interaction that is embedded in a society (Serpe & Stets, 2013). Serpe and Stets (2013) explain that in the social identity theory, identity is seen as a set of different meanings that reveal an individual's *roles* in society (e.g., a mother or student role identity), memberships of specific *groups* in society (e.g., a church or an ice hockey group identity), and *personal characteristics* that make people unique from one another (e.g., artistic or intelligent person identity). The social identity theory is interested in how these many different kinds of identities are related to each other and managed as well as negotiated in interaction (Serpe & Stets, 2013).

3.3. Narrative Identity Theory

McAdams (2011) writes that the idea of narrative identity started to develop in psychology, philosophy, and sociology during the 1980s. McAdams (1985) was the first one to propose a full theory of narrative identity, which was intended for empirical psychologists (McAdams, 2011). McAdams (2011, p. 100) himself describes the narrative identity as “an internalised and evolving story of the self that provides a person's life with some semblance of unity, purpose, and meaning.” According to McAdams (2011), the development of narrative identity starts in late-adolescence and continues through the rest of the adult life. As life evolves, situations change and people grow, the psychosocial challenges of life are faced through a narrative which helps people to continue to make sense of the new life situations of their own lives as well as the lives of others (McAdams, 2011).

The premises of narrative identity echo the work of Erik Erikson, who first described the young adult's need to create their own life anew as the challenge of ego identity (McAdams, 2011). Erikson also thought that organising life in time is the major function of an identity (McAdams, 2011). McAdams (2011, p. 99) answers to this definition succinctly with a question: “What might possibly organise a life in time better than a story?”

Bradford Hall (2010) describes how a narrative approach can be associated with an identity and why it matters. Hall (2010) writes:

The stories people tell themselves have great power. Despite other mundane purposes associated with personal stories, these narratives always address the great questions of

“Who am I?” and “Who are you?” Because these questions are so fundamental to human life, these types of narratives will always be a fundamental part of our lives. (p. 494)

A narrative creates an image of a person to others as well as to the narrator itself, and therefore the narratives do not just tell us what might exist, but also create who a person is (Hall, 2010). Hall (2010) describes it as a creative process that is mentally constructed in the mind of a narrator as well as in the mind of others.

Hall (2010) also describes the formation of a narrative identity. Hall (2010, p. 495) writes that often humans grow up hearing stories in which they are part of, and as people hear these narratives that include themselves it can have a “profound impact on the creation of personal identity and provide one window into the identity others associate with them”. Therefore, it is not foundational to the narrative identity theory to see identity as something a person just claims, but as something that is received from others as well (Hall, 2010).

There are also other foundational premises for the narrative identity (Ropo, 2015). Ropo (2015) states firstly that narratives are located in time and place. Secondly Ropo (2015) states that an individual can manipulate the narratives according to the listeners, time, and situations. Thirdly, a narrative identity is a linguistic portrayal and interpretation of a situation and its meanings. Such identity is therefore mainly based on individual’s memories and experiences even though there might be also polyphonic representations (Ropo, 2015).

The narrative identity theory also has a link to the concept of social identity. This connection is based on the observation that narratives are cumulative in nature (Hall, 2010). As people hear stories for example about mothers, children, and grandfathers, an example is set to show for other individuals in the same social roles what is expected or associated with these types of roles (Hall, 2010). According to Hall (2010, p. 495) “These expectations or templates can be an important part of our identity and are often referred to as our social identity.”

The narrative identity theory sees identity as psychosocial construction that is co-authored and located in time and culture (McAdams, 2011). The narratives create and confirm our identities and help us to interpret and evaluate the social world around us (Hall, 2010).

4. Different Approaches to Identity in Sociology

4.1. Introduction

Sociology, alongside with psychology, is the main perspective to identity within the identity research in the social sciences (Côté, 2006). Sociologists aim to understand the nature of societies, social structures as well as the forms and patterns of their development and transformation (Burke & Stets, 2003). In sociology, identity can refer to societal memberships (e.g., Estonian, European), community or occupation memberships (e.g., teacher, researcher), as well as roles that an individual has chosen for themselves (Ropo, 2015). Burke & Stets (2003) explain this multifaceted understanding of an identity by describing how in sociology an identity is seen as multiple: the self consists of multiple parts (identities) that are links to the social structure around the individual. This view can be traced all the way to the work of the foundational psychologist William James (1890) whose famous notion is that a person has as many different social selves as many different positions that person holds in a society (Burke & Stets, 2003).

Burke and Stets (2003) write that the premise of the sociological approach to the self and identity is the presumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the society and the self. Individuals influence the society through their actions by creating groups, organisations, networks, and institutions, while the society simultaneously influences the individual through the shared language and meanings that enable the individual to participate in interaction and to reflect upon oneself as an object (Burke & Stets, 2003). The ability to reflect oneself is seen to constitute the core of the self (Mead, 1934; McCall & Simmons, 1978 cited in Burke & Stets, 2003, p. 1).

The purposes sociology gives for identity construction and maintenance align with the psychological views of social uncertainty reduction and the positive self-schemata consolidation and thus overall mental well-being. For example, Thoits (2003) finds that the more role-identities an individual has the better is their mental health and overall well-being. Role-identities are the expectations and roles attached to the social positions of a society that individuals occupy, for example a parent, student, or worker (Stets, 2010). These expectations and roles are seen to guide people's attitudes and behaviours (Stets, 2010). Thoits (2003) writes:

Because role-identities define who we are, and why and how we are to behave in normatively specified ways, they provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life and behavioural guidance, thus reducing depression and anxiety, and promoting the avoidance of non-normative behaviours, such as excessive alcohol or drug use. (p. 180)

Hall (2011) describes how sociology is also interested in the relationship between identity and power. Hall (2011, p. 10) writes that, despite the original meaning of identity (sameness), identities can only be defined in relation to the Other who differs from oneself, which actually makes identities the “marking of difference and exclusion”. Therefore, identities cannot be separated from the power relations that exist in societies (Hall, 2011). Since identities are constructed within play of power and exclusion, sociological identity research also seeks to understand these power relations in societies and within groups (Burke & Stets, 2003; Hall, 2010). Crime and law, education as well as race/ethnicity are the three main areas of sociological research where the sociological identity theory has been applied to, because these topics are tightly connected to power relations within societies (Serpe & Stets, 2013).

Another major interest in sociological identity research is to understand how societal changes affect identities. For example, Côté (2006) has written how post-modernity or late modernity has created social conditions that have problematized identities. Côté (2006, p. 5) writes that “The embeddedness of problematic identity issues in an increasing portion of the life course is now so pervasive that it is no longer unusual for full-grown people to continue to ponder issues that were once resolved early and decisively.” Similarly, Hall (2011) states that identities are notably fragmented in the late modern times, and Bauman (2011) speculates analogously how the solidity of identities has disappeared in the modern societies and the maintenance of identity has switched into an aim of not having a “fixed identity” since nothing is fixed anymore in the modern societies. Therefore, we can see why Hall (2011) proposes that instead of understanding who we are, the question could be who we are becoming, which could be answered by using the resources of history, language, and culture. Hall (2011) sees that the understanding of an identity also requires an understanding of the history, language, and culture relevant to the identity.

Thus, in sociology identities are seen to construct within a society through a shared language, meanings, and interaction while simultaneously being under the influence of power relations and societal changes. Understanding the language, culture, and history of the society or societies that the self is embedded in helps to understand the identities a person holds. Burke and Stets (2003) divide the sociological views of identity into three major categories: 1) the symbolic interactionism, 2) the social identity theory, and 3) the cultural or collective view of an identity. The chapter will continue by reviewing each sociological approach to an identity.

4.1. Symbolic Interactionism Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that falls within the sociological social psychology metatheory (Quist-Adade, 2019). It is originally rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism (Hewitt, 2010). Quist-Adade (2019, p. 20) writes about the definition of symbolic interactionism as “a theoretical framework or paradigm based on the assumption that social reality is created and recreated (continuously) through human interactions through the use of symbols.” In sociology, the symbolic interactionism perspectives are the main approach to the study of identity (Serpe & Stryker, 2011).

The symbolic interactionism was originally brought to sociology by Mead in the early 20th century, although his student Blumer defined the theory by outlining the three foundational principles and coined the name symbolic interactionism (Hewitt, 2010). The three defining principles of symbolic interactionism are: 1) people act in and toward the social world in the basis of meaning; 2) meanings arise in interactions, and these meanings are not fixed; 3) meanings are in an ongoing process of interpretation that are strongly affected by person’s self-consciousness (Hewitt, 2010, 806).

Generally, the symbolic interactionism is divided into two major approaches (Burke & Stets, 2003). The first one was the traditional approach by Blumer (1969), known as *the situational approach* which views the society as always changing in the process of interpretation by actors in different situations (Burke & Stets, 2003). The second approach was formulated by Stryker (1980) and is called the *structural approach* which views the society as steadier and more stable in its reflection of patterned human behaviour.

Beeghey, Powers and Turner (2002) named four questions that symbolic interactionism attempts to answer:

- 1) How are society and individual connected and linked?;
- 2) How do individual acts and social structures influence one another?;
- 3) How are societies reproduced through the actions and interactions of its individual members?;
- 4) How are the thoughts and actions of members of society influenced by the social structures of society? (Turner et al., 2002, p. 434 in Quist-Adade, 2019, p. 22)

In the symbolic interactionism, the understanding of identity lies on the premise set by Mead (1934): the self emerges out of the mind, the mind arises and develops in interaction, and the patterned social interactionism forms the basis of social structures (Burke & Stets, 2003). Hewitt

(2010) describes identity in the symbolic interactionism as reference of the individual's location in the social life. Hewitt (2010, p. 809) continues describing how identity is seen to be established by feelings, thoughts, and actions of others as well as those of the individual, and therefore the symbolic interactionism views identity inevitably as "a social process rather than simply an individual possession."

In the symbolic interactionism, social identity is seen as the primary part of the self-concept and even as the most important part for some people (Hewitt, 2010). However, symbolic interactionism does not reject the importance of personal identities and acknowledges that people also have personal identities that reflect their individual life histories and accomplishments, not solely their social roles and group memberships (Hewitt, 2010). Hewitt (2010, p. 809) also points out an interesting side of the symbolic interactionist understanding of identity: identities are seen to be founded on biographical narrative, because the stories people tell about themselves helps them to locate themselves in a social world, which therefore connects this theory also to the narrative identity theory within psychology.

4.2. Identity Theory

Sociological identity theory stems from symbolic interactionism (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). Identity theory was created by Stryker (1968, 1980, 1987; Serpe and Stryker 1982), and it proposed to explain the reciprocal relationship between a multifaceted self and a society from a sociological perspective (Hogg et al., 1995). The sociological identity theory is different from the social identity theory, which belongs to the field of social psychology (Hogg et al., 1995). As the names of the two theories suggest, they are remarkably similar and therefore, in order to understand the individualism of the sociological identity theory, this chapter examines identity theory against the social psychology's social identity theory.

In an analysis of the two theories, Hogg et al. (1995) explain their differences and similarities. The premise of identity in the identity theory lies in the understanding that the nature of the self is social, and it consists of multiple parts (identities) that emerge from interaction in a society (Hogg et al., 1995). The social identity theory shares the same premise, but the two theories seek answers to different things; identity theory tries to explain behaviour that is related to roles, while the social identity theory aims to explain group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg et al., 1995). In their analysis Hogg et al. (1995, p. 266) states that the identity theory is interested in the "--relationship between the roles people play in society and the identities that such roles confer.

The focus is on individual behaviour as it is mediated by role identities.” Despite differences in research interests, the social identity theory also views identities as something that emerge from the roles people occupy in a society (Hogg et al., 1995).

Role identities are seen as self-conceptions and self-definitions that come with a role that people apply to themselves as they occupy a certain role (Hogg et al., 1995). This provides meaning for the self and helps to predict others’ social behaviour as well (Hogg et al. 1995). According to Hogg et al., (1995, p. 257) the identity theory sees the role-identities hierarchically organised within the self-concept according to their relevance, which is called *identity salience*. The salience of an identity is determined by *commitment* to a certain role. The more meaningful relationships are attached to a certain role, the more committed a person is to it, and hence it becomes a salient role which is often activated to guide individual’s actions (Hogg et al., 1995.) The social identity theory views identities as hierarchically organised according to their salience but also finds that memory (*chronical accessibility in memory*) plays a part in the process of accessing an identity in a social situation (Hogg, 2010).

Another major difference between the theories highlighted in the analysis by Hogg et al. (1995) is the level of analysis the theories provide for explaining the socio-cognitive processes underlying the functioning of identities. The social identity theory explains social behaviour by a cognitive process called *categorisation*, which leads to the formation of ingroups and outgroups. Resulting in emergence of social identities (Hogg et al., 1995). However, Hogg et al. (1995) point out that the sociological identity theory does not invest in the elaboration of cognitive processes, which may give an advantage to the social identity theory in this area. Hence, perhaps in the future the social identity theory could provide the missing cognitive dimension for the sociological identity theory (Hogg et al. 1995).

Interestingly, Hogg et al. (1995) show how the identity theory is narrow in its research as it set outs to explore only role identities and the behaviour of role identities. For example, Hogg et al. (1995) say that the identity theory does not consider large-scale social factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, or nationality, which is interesting since they are the main sources of social identity in the social identity theory. Hogg et al. (1995) conclude by stating that the sociological research of the social identity actually sets out to explore more individualistic aspects of social identity such as psychological well-being, than psychological social identity research itself does.

4.3. Cultural or Collective View of Identity

According to Burke and Stets (2003), one of the sociological ways of examining identity is the cultural or collective view. Burke and Stets (2003, p. 9) describe that, in this view, identity is seen as a concept that represents “the ideas, beliefs, and practices of a group or collective.” Urrieta (2018) sums up the premises of the cultural view of identity as the approach that views identity as something that can be found from the differences between an individual and the social and cultural others. Even though identity was studied for a long time from the perspective of individualism and emotional self-understanding it has never been outside of the reach of social forces such as culture, politics, economics, and philosophies (Urrieta, 2018).

According to Burke & Stets (2003), this branch of sociological research is mostly seen in the work of ethnic identity. However, the cultural or collective view of identity in sociology does not represent one cohesive theory but many different aspects and research interests such as social justice, activism, power relations, identity politics, gender, ethnicity, race, and immigration, to name a few (Urrieta, 2018). Theories stemming from these research interests are, for example, Critical race theory, Black racial identity theory, and Culturally relevant pedagogy (Urrieta, 2018). Jones (2010) describes the nature of ethnicity studies to be often interdisciplinary, which draws resources from different fields such as religion, philosophy, anthropology, politics, and law. On the other hand, the roots of cultural identity can be found from the domain of psychology, namely from the work of Erikson (1968), who proposed the formation of individual identity within one’s cultural community during adolescence (Jensen, Arnett & McKenzie, 2011).

However, instead of forming an identity in a cultural community, Jensen et al. (2011) emphasise that the present-day definition of the cultural identity formation is the process of deciding the cultural community one belongs to. Brown (2010) continues by stating that an individual’s cultural identification is usually demonstrated by adopting the behavioural norms and language codes of a culture as well as the association with the culture. Urrieta (2018) defines cultural identities as the “self and collective understanding of belonging, or memberships to particular group that share common differences and/or shared practices to other identifiable groups or groupings.” Urrieta (2013) has also defined cultural identity thoroughly by saying that cultural identities are the learned ways of knowing (epistemologies) and being in the world (ontologies).

As for ethnic identity Umaña-Taylor (2011, p. 792) states that “the identity that develops as a function of one’s ethnic group membership can be generally referred to as one’s ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is conceptualised as a component of one’s overall identity and will vary in its

salience across individuals”. Umaña-Taylor (2011) also points out that there are a number of definitions in the field that vary in the level of detail, although the more complex ones are preferred among the scholars today since they reflect the current understanding of ethnic identity as a complex and multidimensional construct.

The ethnic identity research has found ethnic identity to have a connection to individual’s psychosocial functioning and development (Umaña-Taylor, 2011). For example, Umaña-Taylor (2011) describes one of the research interests to be the protective function of ethnic identity for the members of ethnic minority groups. Although the research interests of ethnic identity formation are similar to the research interests of cultural identity formation, they are separated as the former one focuses primarily on minorities (Jensen et al., 2011). According to Jensen et al. (2011, p. 286), the main research question of ethnic identity formation is “how members of ethnic and racial minority groups negotiate their identifications with their own group in the context of living among other ethnic and racial groups?”

Two central concepts in this approach to identity are the concepts of multicultural self and bicultural identity (Cross & Gore, 2012). Cross and Gore (2012) describe the multicultural self to be a person’s selfhood that has been influenced by multiple cultures especially during the childhood and adolescence for example due to immigration, expatriation, or conquest. This can lead to a bicultural identity which means that a person has “integrated and internalised two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside of them” (Cross & Gore, 2012, p. 601; Hong, Ying-yi, Morris & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Smith (2011) has assessed an increase on the prevalence of multicultural- and bicultural identities in the 21st century since the interaction between different national cultural groups has increased due to globalisation.

The effect of globalisation on cultural identities is a prominent research interest in the sociological approach of cultural identities (Jensen et al. 2011). For example, while writing about the challenges of present-day cultural identity formation, Jensen et al. (2011, p. 289) point out that, instead of navigating a process of becoming an adult member of one culture, an individual needs to master the local and global cultures. Changes in languages caused by globalisation are also discussed because languages are seen to compose a key part of cultural identity (Jensen et al., 2011). These changes and challenges caused by globalisation can lead to cultural identity confusion, which Jensen et al. (2011) define as its own kind of identity confusion. Other researchers, such as Cross and Gore (2012), have also noted a potential stress that can occur if one identifies with more than one national culture.

5. Discussion

5.1. Observations About The Premises of Identity

The aim of this literature review was to create an understanding of identity, which has become an astonishingly popular concept in social sciences. However, the term is not unambiguous and therefore it quickly occurred that, to create a wholesome understanding of the term “identity”, it needs to be reviewed from multiple aspects. Thus, this thesis first explored the history of identity as well as different theoretical approaches within psychology and sociology. The final section of this thesis draws together the information that has been discovered earlier and presents an attempt to answer to the research question “What does identity mean in social sciences?”

As it has appeared, the term identity can be found from multiple fields in social sciences, but two fields have shown significant interest to the study of identity: psychology and sociology. Other social sciences rarely explore the essence of identity in the same way as psychology and sociology do. Instead, other social sciences seem to use the psychological or sociological identity research tradition as a base for their theoretical estimations. Therefore, this outline about the essence of identity chiefly mainly consists of the above explored psychological and sociological aspects.

The separateness of the field of identity research derives from deeply different metatheoretical assumptions about the premises of identity. The psychological and sociological study of identity are separated even though some of theories are notably similar, for example the social identity theory in psychology and the identity theory in sociology. Still, the two fields are sometimes considered almost as rivalry. However, personally I think it can be observed from the literature that these two identity research traditions can also be viewed as complementary to each other. The psychological identity research enriches our understanding of identity with its intrapsychic approach and sociology with its macro-societal focus.

This chapter will next proceed to present a few observations that were made about the premise of identity. Firstly, identity is a concept tied to time. As time has passed, different dimensions of identity have been emphasised. When the timeline of the Western notion of identity is observed, it can be noticed that originally identity was viewed as something private. At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of 20th century, identity started to be considered more as a social construct. Later occurred the thinking that identity is actually more broadly a selfhood (the self) that consists of multiple identities, including personal and social identities. Therefore, the

understanding that has been constructed in this literature review is just a reflection of the current understanding about identity. Identity is a mental construct (Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012) that lives in relation to research and time.

Secondly, identity cannot be comprehensively explained with one definition. Instead, there are multiple fields, schools of thought, and theories that present their own approaches to identity. Some notable theories from the fields of psychology and sociology were presented in the previous chapters of this thesis to demonstrate the vast number of approaches to identity. These theories often have interesting connections and overlaps with one another. For example, many of the sociological identity theories are largely based on the psychoanalytic theories and on cognitive processes, even though their own research focus is on a completely different level: society and behaviour. This was seen, for example, in the case of social identity theories where the psychological identity theory actually better explains the sociological research questions about social identities than sociology itself does.

Often, the literature that uses the concept of identity needs to explain what it is actually referring to with the term. Fearon (1999), who has studied the term identity and its usage in ordinary language as well as in social sciences discourse has summarised the most common meanings of identity today. According to Fearon (1999), the first possible meaning is a social category that is defined by membership rules and characteristic attributes or expected behaviours. Another option is a set of some “socially distinguishing features that a person takes special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential” (Fearon, 1999, p. 2). As for the third option, Fearon (1999) names the possibility of combining the first two options. Hence, it can be noticed that Fearon’s analysis reflects the current understanding of the premise of identity in social sciences: a selfhood consists of the social and personal identities.

5.3. Different Dimensions of Identity

After exploring some of the different theories regarding identity that have been formulated within psychology and sociology, it can be observed that every identity theory subscribes to some sort of metatheoretical assumptions about the nature of identity. In order to understand identity on a deeper level, this thesis will next discuss some of these dimensions. These dimensions can also

be used as tools to assess the meaning of identity in a certain context if the term is not elaborated sufficiently.

The first dimension to assessing identity is construction. What is perceived to be the origin of identity? On the other hand, theories that emphasise social context as a source of identity see identity chiefly as something that is socially constructed. This can be seen in the social identity theories and generally in the sociological research tradition where identity is seen to emerge from social interaction. On the other hand, identity can also be viewed as personally constructed. For example, this premise to identity is used in the narrative identity theory in psychology, where the verbalised stories about oneself are seen as the base of personally constructed identities. The third way of perceiving the origin of identity is the notion that identity is discovered. This approach to identity is also more characteristic to the psychological identity theories where the aspect of personal identity is emphasised. An approach that views identity as discovered can be seen, for example, in the identity development theory that considers exploring and achieving multiple identities as a developmental task for everyone.

Another dimension of identity is time orientation. For example, Oyserman et al. (2012) brings forward this aspect of identity. Identity may be future-orientated when the emphasis is on the things that one feels obligated to become or wishes to become. Identity may be past-oriented when the emphasis is on the things that used to be true for oneself, or present-oriented when the emphasis is on the things that are true for an identity now. This dimension of time-orientation in identity provides meaning to an individual. This dimension can be seen connected to the narrative and developmental approaches to identity where the reflection of the past and the future developments are central.

One notable dimension of identity is the question about the stability of identity's essence. Is identity a fluid, stable, or evolving mental construct? For example, if this question is reflected against the symbolic interactionism theory, identity can appear to be a concept that includes a dimension of fluidity. This is because the symbolic interactionism theory views the meanings that people make about social world as not fixed. Other views can also be found: for example, the identity development theories often view identity as relatively stable once it has been formed. All in all, most of the identity theories today subscribe to the notion that the self includes stable as well as fluid aspects (Oyserman et al. 2012).

These different dimensions of identity presented above come together in the great question of the premise of identity. Is identity a private, social, personal, or shared phenomenon or a combination

of the preceding ones? In general, the psychological approach to identity tends to view identity as a personal phenomenon, while the sociological approach focuses more to the social and shared aspect as the premise of identity (Côté, 2006).

5.4. Final Inferences About Identity

Identity develops in relation to time. It can be a discovered, personally or socially constructed phenomenon. Identity can evolve or be rather stable. Identity can be a feeling of something personal and private, for example a sense of belonging or sense of continuity. At the same time identity is something that is given to individuals by other people around them. Identities are the things that define who one is.

Therefore, identity can refer to personal characteristics and traits. They can be physical or mental. Identity also refers to the social relations, roles and social group memberships that tell an individual their social location in the world. Social identities also help individuals to act according to their locations (Oyserman et al; 2012, p. 69).

Identity is a descriptive phenomenon. Identity is a concept that gives meanings and therefore defines the borders between things by being a margin of sameness and difference. What is a person, and where does their 'self' end? Identities come into existence in relation to something else that is different than it , for example a mother/–child, confident/–shy, employee/–employer.

In addition, with sameness and difference comes the element of power. As Urrieta (2018, p. 5) states, “The word is based on difference and power.” Similarly, identity can also mean the absence of power. This can be clearly seen in the discrimination faced by minorities. Some identities, in this case a group membership, can mean a lower status and less privilege compared to other groups in a society. In the same way, some individual characteristics and traits are often seen as more desirable in a community than others are, and hence some people can have dominance over others. As it can be noticed, identity can give a description to a number of things, dynamics amongst other things.

In the end, this term that has received astonishing amount of attention and has multiple meanings seems to be one way of making sense of the world. It is a concept that gives us an alternative option to the attempt of answering the great questions of humankind: “Who are you?” and “Who am I?” Identity is one way of explaining social behaviour and the psychological experiences that human beings have in this world.

As it can be seen, the concept of identity has a lot to offer as a way of observing and understanding the world. Based on this literature review it could be suggested that this potential could be utilized more in the teacher education programmes in Finland. The benefits of including this topic in teacher training programmes could be a research topic worth serious consideration.

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